

E 400
.C52

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005023920









LETTER OF THE HON. LANGDON CHEVES,

"
To THE EDITORS OF THE CHARLESTON MERCURY, SEPT. 11, 1844.

THE appearance of the following letter in the *Mercury*, excited an extraordinary interest in Charleston, and from all sides come demands that it should be republished in a form more convenient for circulation, perusal and preservation, than the columns of a newspaper. The calm, earnest, deeply-reasoned work of a retired statesman, whose past life has been signally illustrated by rare ability, and a still rarer self-denial, consistency and stern integrity—this letter commends itself to the study and reflection of all good men. It is full of matter, and manfully and eloquently handled—great questions opened, and lighted up to their lowest depths. We trust the Press will unite in giving it general circulation among the people.

Messrs Editors:—

I have been informed, to my surprise, that, in consequence of a short note, addressed to my fellow-citizens of the neighborhood in which I live, on the 4th of July last, I am supposed to be in favor of resistance by the action of South-Carolina alone. Such an impression is entirely erroneous. I expressed a dozen years since, the same sentiments, almost in the same words, and was, at the same time, as is well known, decidedly opposed to resistance by a single State. But I shall now, with your permission, leave no doubt of the position in which I wish to stand, and, in doing so, I shall mingle my opinions and counsels with those of my fellow-citizens, to be weighed for what they are worth, in "this great argument."

The Tariff I consider an act of insufferable and insulting oppression, which ought to be borne only until it can be judiciously resisted. But this resistance, in my opinion, to be effective, must unite the efforts of, at least, a large portion of the sufferers. I do not think one State ought to resist alone. There will be neither confidence nor certainty in such a course. The people of one State, standing alone, would not be *heartily* united among themselves. It might be different if the State were alone in the suffering; but standing in the midst of common sufferers, much more numerous than themselves, whose arms were folded, the presence of these wou'd operate like a moral condemnation of their act, and chill the warm blood, though animated in so good a cause, and enfeeble the strong arm just raised to strike.

But, It is asked, if our fellow-sufferers will not unite with us in resistance, shall we basely submit? We have no right to anticipate that event. In my opinion, if they do not, they will be insensible to honor and to shame, and equally so, to their interests and their danger. But we dare not cast this reproof upon them, merely because they do not think fit to adopt our measures and our time. If we think they are tardy, we must entreat them, with brotherly zeal, to quicken their step. If our measures be not acceptable to them, let us modify them, or adopt theirs if they lead to the same end. Resistance will be a very solemn act. If it be rashly attempted and fail, it will rivet our chains and bring on us new burdens and insults. Success in such great enterprizes is not usually the result of a sudden thought or the fruit of a single day, but of wise and sober deliberations and protracted action. We are speaking of the movement of nations—a successful resistance will probably cost some years. The circumstances in which we are placed, cannot fail to remind us of our first great act of resistance to oppression. Let us then boast less often and less idly of the deeds of our ancestors, and more faithfully imitate them. They did not jump in a single breath to their conclusion, and talk of single handed resistance. They deliberated long, and they wisely united all who were under common suffering and in common danger. Let us do as they did. Let associations be formed in every Southern, and, if possible, in every South-Western State, and let them confer together and interchange views and information; let leading men, through committees and private correspondence, collect, compare and concentrate the views of like men in the respective States, and when ripe for it, and not before, let representatives from these States meet in Convention, and, if circumstances promise success, let them *then* deliberate on the mode of resistance and the measure of redress. If not, still persevere; let neither delay nor first failures, should they happen, create despair or faint heartedness. Inflexible perseverance rarely fails in a good cause, and ours is one that must never be abandoned. Continue to enlighten the public mind, rouse the public feeling, excite the public shame, for the degradation to which we have been brought; let your exertions be not occasional and desultory, but organized and incessant; avoid especially all blustering, and put in the place of it sound sense and forcible reasoning. Your appeals to your fellow-citizens may, nevertheless, be as impassioned as your sense of injury and shame and danger may inspire, but they ought to be chastened by a regard to the moral sense of an enlightened community. Add to the proper functions of the newspaper press, the circulation of able and well chosen tracts, and let them be found in every hamlet and house in the South and South-West. Carry your exertions into the camp of the enemy. Thus did the colonies in their preparation for resistance to the mother country. During that struggle, we had among our friends the Burkes and the Chathams, and others of the greatest names that ever adorned humanity. There are in every country virtuous men who hate injustice and detest oppression, though they be the acts of their own country and government; and their influence, though they may not be able to carry a vote, has often great moral and political weight. Their approbation will have great effect in sustaining your own resolution. But in this case you may appeal to their interest as well as their justice; for the mass of the people, nowhere, derive any advantage from the oppression you suffer, and have great and honest interests put at hazard by the resistance you may be obliged to make. Manufactures should be the last resort of industry in every country; for when forced, as they are with us, they serve no interests but those of the capitalists who set them in motion, and their immediate localities. Commerce is the proper hand-maid of agriculture, and agriculture the blessed employment of man. Already both are languishing under the intriguing power of manufacturing capitalists. Without the

agriculture of the South and South West, the grass would grow in the streets of your great Northern cities. What, comparatively, would Boston, New-York, Philadelphia and Baltimore be, were the South and South West, or even the South alone, obliged to retire from the Union? What, if our intercourse with these cities were transferred to Liverpool and Havre? A moment's reflection will be sufficient to show how little difficult this transfer would be, especially when we consider the present and growing celerity of steam power. These and like ports are the ultimate points of our present commerce, though we are contented (good, easy people as we are, when not trampled to the earth by oppression) to bear the charges of a double transit, and to employ these Northern cities as our factors. What, if the unhappy event of separation shall be provoked, is to prevent us from doing our own business, as we have done before, and reaping the profits which we now bestow on others, and which have made the commercial men of the North and East "Merchant Princes?" Charleston and Savannah would then be great and flourishing cities. New-Orleans would speedily swell into the present magnitude of New-York, and every town and interest connected with them would increase and flourish in proportion. These may be called by the interested and unreflecting, idle dreams, but those acquainted with the nature of commerce, and who have reflected on the concentrating power of the Union which now builds up and sustains the great Northern and Eastern cities, well know that they are sober truths, and that, in the event deprecated, the result is certain and inevitable. Rouse then the proper enquiries, and you will have numerous friends within the enemy's lines, and these, too, will be the best friends of their own immediate countries.

Renounce absolutely and unreservedly, during this contest, all pretensions to the high honors of the Union. Fill no office under the General Government, except in the Legislative Halls. This will be no sacrifice, for no son of yours will, whatever be his merits, ever fill the Executive Chair until your wrongs are righted; until you shall be respected as equals in the Government; and until the withering scorn of the Legislative Assemblies shall banish from their floors your calumnious accusers.

I do not say that you ought not to join, even zealously and with all your might, in the choice of a chief magistrate of the Union; but let it not be in support of a Southern aspirant, which, at this time, will weaken, distract and mislead you. Support always the candidate most likely to sustain your own and your country's interest. I speak not of Carolina alone, but of all the Southern States—give your whole and undivided weight to the men and the party opposed to your oppressors, and claim no office for yourselves. By this unambitious course you may gain some weight in the national councils—at present you have none. The people of the West, notwithstanding some little apparent alienation, which has depended vastly more on the movements of men, than on principles, and which therefore cannot last long, are your natural allies. Let the South and the West combine with the democracy of the other parts of the Union. The West have at present abundant cause to open their eyes to the evils they suffer from Tariff and Abolition combinations; for these powers are closely united, and together have wrought out the lamentable result to which I allude. If Providence had enabled the West to possess themselves of the greatest blessing that God could grant them—of what would give them wealth and security and power—they ought to have desired Texas. But they see themselves by these unholy combinations, entirely and heartlessly deprived of these great blessings. All the South Western States (by which I mean all South and West of the Ohio River) are of our blood and lineage; their Institutions are more or less Southern, and their interests are really the same as those of the South. There is reason, therefore, to hope ere long we shall stand, as we were wont to do, in our country's

more liberal and palmy days, side by side in our political movements. By this natural alliance in former times was the high handed power of that same people which now oppress you, put down. This was the policy of Jefferson, and this alliance formed the great Democratic party of the Union. That great bond is now fearfully shattered and almost severed by tariff and abolition combinations, and will soon altogether perish if these combinations be not resisted. Look at the great Democratic family of the North and East, how it hobbles along in a spiritless paralytic movement, like that of the halt and lame! Look at the great and good Old Dominion, how it has sunk and fallen, how its glory has gone down! Look at your own shameless Southern desertions! What is the cause of this deplorable condition of our polities? What is the cause of that general gloomy discontent and uncertainty which prevail among the people concerning their political movements; of the infidelity so shamefully exhibited by their representatives, who have substituted the little schemes of faction and personal resentment for the great interests of their country? You see Southern Senators voting for a tariff which they themselves repeatedly condemned and reprobated, and Western Senators against the annexation of Texas, which their constituents, to a man, anxiously wished to acquire. What is the cause of those gloomy clouds which lour in the political sky; of that fearful dread which all good men suffer of a fatal disruption of our noble Institutions? Dark as this picture may be and certainly is, exclude but a single group of the numerous *Dramatis personæ*; let but the scene change so as to exclude from the stage a few hundred overgrown capitalists, the governors of power looms and spinning jennies, and a very small number of reckless fanatic abolitionists, and all will be light and life. We shall immediately see the sky brighten and the clouds disperse—we shall discover a free, profitable and increasing commerce, feeding and sustaining a prosperous agriculture; high prices for the produce of the soil, and cheap supplies for its cultivators; with union, harmony and fraternal love binding together the whole people of the whole country; the good old Democracy triumphant, and the motley band of Whigism—"Here a bit of blackstone and there a bit of white,"—hiding its head in feebleness and defeat; the whole Union flourishing, and the South loyal, contented and happy; Texas bounding and strengthening our borders, and increasing our wealth and greatness. In the name of God, what fatuity has come over the people, that they do not discover the petty and odious thraldom in which they are bound, and by which the greatest boons and blessings of Providence are threatened with entire subversion, and even, in effect, turned into curses. But to return from this two long but interesting digression, in which we have looked with a kind of prophetic vision, we think, on what we hope to see realized at no distant day. When three or four States shall arise with unblenching front, and unite heartily and resolutely, others will speedily join them, and our relief will in all likelihood, be peacefully accomplished, and the Union preserved. Yet let not this blessed hope be relied upon with confidence, but anticipate a worse result, and be prepared to meet it.

But shall we put at hazard that Union which we so much love and honor, in which we purchased a partnership with so many sacrifices, and be forced out of it by that very people against whom we have heretofore defended it. It is, in my opinion, a lamentable truth, that, that hazard must be met, and it is idle and even dangerous to hesitate in avowing it as the possible result, however much we may deprecate it. There are worse evils than disunion, and we can hardly doubt that we have been long suffering under them. But, if the dissolution of the Union be a great evil—and it certainly will be so to the American people, and would be so to us if we were permitted to enjoy its benefits—the guilt and the reproach will rest upon those who wan-

tonly provoked it, and those who wantonly have suffered it to take place. Yes, wantonly, for the historian must record the fact, that "the sacrifice of that glorious Institution which might have secured and perpetuated, to a distant posterity, the happiness, prosperity and greatness of twenty millions of people, at this time, and of more than an hundred to no very remote futurity, was made to gratify the inordinate avarice of a few score (not more) of great capitalists, in a small section of the country, and the furious madness of a smaller number of fanatical abolitionists, who combined together to oppress the interests and to destroy the peace and happiness of the people of the Southern States, who, to the honor of humanity, resisted and overthrew their wicked designs."

Before God, we do not wish disunion. Let the government be justly administered, and we will glory in the Union, and give it our whole hearts and strength, in peace and war, as we have done before when some of its most noisy eulogists, at the present time, were not in the ranks with us,—when they were almost in the ranks of a foreign enemy. But who has heretofore spoken of disunion? whence did the odious term originate? not surely from the South. It came in the chill blast of the North and East. By what description of persons has the idea, at any time, been put forth at the South? what man of note, what great public assembly of the South has heretofore spoken of disunion. But among those who have recently taken it under their peculiar guardianship, the greatest men they boast have repeatedly and flippantly uttered it. When the great and invaluable acquisition of Louisiana was made, did not one of their most distinguished men on the floor of Congress declare, that it would be followed by their severance from the Union, "peaceably, if they could, forcibly if they must?" When the Treaty for the Annexation of Texas, (not less important than valuable) was announced, their greatest men rushed forward with breastless haste to utter equivalent language. Recently one of their greatest, wisest and gravest Legislative bodies modestly proposed to expunge from the Constitution the most sacred article in it, "by which we were woed into the compact, and without which we would have nothing to do with it; and what would this have been but actually and faithlessly perpetrating disunion? Yet these are the people who vociferously accuse you of the desire of disunion, when "the head and front of your offending" does not amount to a tithe of their own guilt—if, indeed, there be the shadow of guilt on your part in complaining of the great abuses of it, and, if under the sore afflictions you suffer through its forms, you propose to calculate the value of it and the dangers of it too, for the threatened dangers of it are more alarming than all we actually suffer, great as that may be.

The Tariff is only an exponent of the power and the disposition to abuse and oppress us under the forms of the Constitution. Do not the halls of Congress ring daily with their unfraternal and insolent homilies on our morals and humanity; and are we a free people, who are their equals in every moral and intellectual quality, to hear this? Do we not hear ominous threats of their interposition in our domestic concerns and with our tenderest interests, as if we were dependant or conquered provinces? Do we not know that those who thus raise their voices under the privileges of the Constitution, are the mouth-pieces of foreign fanatic associations with whom they correspond? Yet, these people eat the bread, taken from your own mouths, of that labor which they reprobate, and stint the comforts of that class of persons of whose condition they affect to be so fastidiously tender; for among the very highest duties which they impose to increase their extravagant gains, is that on the clothing of the slave. The heart of their humanity is in their strong box, and in the balance sheet of their profit and loss account. They are, *Les amis des noirs*, with

less motive of virtue than the Furies whom the National Convention of France vomited upon St. Domingo, to scatter death among their white brethren, and everlasting desolation and misery among the blacks. These were honest, erring and unhappy enthusiasts who knew not what they were doing; but our assailants are cold blooded calculators, with this awful example before their eyes, stealing upon their victims, under the forms of the Constitution which guarantees the rights which they seek to destroy. Remember!—On the inviolability of the Institution which is thus threatened and assailed, depends, not our prosperity alone, but every blessing under heaven, which we enjoy. Everything Southern must necessarily perish with it. Houses, lands, stocks, monies at interest, and every other species of property, must go down with it and share a common fate. Let these people be unchecked, and we shall have nor country, nor home, nor fire-side, nor civilization, nor social charities, nor life itself. We shall be blotted from the face of the earth. The beautiful and prolific South will exhibit nothing but seathed and blackened ruins, with a remnant of the African race wandering amidst them in all the misery of desolation and hopelessness. The interposition we deprecate will be worse than plague, pestilence and famine; worse than all the horrors of war, if waged by a civilized people.

The bayonets of our assailants pointed against our breasts would be more harmless than their counsels. On this subject, the Methodist Episcopal Church of the South have set us a noble example, which, if our opponents persist, we shall be obliged to imitate, were the Tariff out of the question. Yet they invoke the Constitution, appeal to the sacred name of Washington, and call upon you in his words to frown upon the man who shall endeavor to weaken its ties. Would it not be enough to return the chalice, with its poisoned ingredients, to their own guilty lips? But let their guilt be what it may, we are not and never have been the enemies of the Union. What Union did that great and good man venerate? It was the Union as it came from the hands of the Patriots who framed it. It was the Union we consented to. An Union of equal rights and equal burdens. An Union in which we were to be equally respected and honored with our brethren, and our peculiar institutions sacredly protected. Not a Union of strife, and tribute, and insult, and slavery, on our parts. But would he, all just and wise, under the forms of the Constitution, have recommended submission to the unconstitutional oppression, insult and injury, under which we groan? General Washington was a sincere Christian, and would have called upon his fellow-citizens to frown upon the man who should endeavor to subvert the holy religion, in accordance with whose principles he had formed his own, and under whose influence he walked during the whole of his good and glorious life. But if its Professors, regardless of its truth and fearless of their God, had introduced *the Inquisition* into the land, would he have looked with approbation on an *auto da fe*, and called upon the people to support and venerate it? It was a righteous government which he sustained, and not one of guilt and oppression. He would, according to the whole tenor of his life, have been among the first to resist it; and so ought we, while, like him, we venerate it, in its truth and purity. No, our crime is not disloyalty to the Union, but our *Error* is too great a veneration for it, and if we carry that veneration much further, it will be an evidence of unparalleled stupidity or unblushing baseness. Preserve the Union, if you can—appeal to the great Democratic party to save the Union, which it can do, if it will. That party, though shattered, and confounded, and betrayed, embraces a large majority of the people, almost the whole conservative class, almost all of every sound class, opposed only by manufacturing capitalists and their dependants, abolitionists and their deluded followers, and the adherents of personal cabals and unprincipled factions. Let them unite in “a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull

altogether," and the Union will be safe, and not only safe, but purified. But, if they will not, neither the preservation of the Union nor any other consideration under heaven, should induce you to continue your submission to the spoliation, ignominy, and danger, to which under the abuses of the Constitution, you are now subject. This language may be new and strong, but it is not the language of violence. There is a wide difference between earnestness and decision, and violence. The last is folly and weakness, the first is the sublimation of truth and sober reason. I warn you that anything short of what this language intimates will be trifling with the subject. Do not deceive yourselves by supposing that the only struggle before you, or the greatest, is that of the Tariff. That of Abolition is at hand (how near, we cannot distinctly see) and of ten times the importance and danger. The Abolitionists aim directly at your destruction, and indirectly at the subversion of the Union. That neither our destruction, nor the misery and desolation of the Race they pretend to serve, much less the preservation of the Union, will restrain them in their endeavors to establish their principles, is but too clear. Theirs is not a work of love, but of hate. They hate you more than they love the African Race. But what I mean to say is, that they aim at the destruction of the Union. All will admit that they aim at speedy abolition, and to force it upon you. Now, is there any sober man of common sense in the nation, who can believe if they advance one step further, but that the Union must be dissolved. They cannot advance one step further without entering your territories and controlling your laws. This, I think, will appear by stating the advances they have already made. They have not indeed actually exchanged credentials and entered into a Treaty in diplomatic form, with foreign nations, but they are most directly co-operating with foreign associations, and, at least, one great Foreign Government, all pledged to universal emancipation. The proofs are, among others, 1st. The existence of Abolition Societies of great weight and numbers in Great Britain. 2d. The co-operation of the Government of Great Britain with their own Societies. 3d. The co-operation of our Abolitionists with those Foreign Societies. 4th. That these Foreign Societies have their agents and orators, with whom they correspond, on the floor of Congress. 5th. That they have a political party in many States, organized and distinctly designated. 6th. That this party forms one great element of the great Whig party of the Union—at least in power, if not in name—so much so, that if the Whig candidate for the Presidency be successful, he will owe his success to abolition votes; because in some States, whose votes are necessary to his success, New-York for example, the Whigs, without the votes of the Abolitionists, will be in the minority. These Foreign Societies will thus, if that result happen, have had great influence in the election of our Chief Magistrate. 7th. Great Britain has already interposed with our own Government in a manner to countenance the American Abolitionists, by declaring to its views in coincidence with theirs, and which our Executive Government has very properly protested against. 8th. There is the hostile Act of the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts, which in itself would, if executed, be a subversion of the Union. 9th. The temper of the Abolitionists, evincive of the consciousness of their power, of which I shall give but one proof. That is a letter of the *Anacharsis Cloots* of the United States. In this letter, after abusing in the grossest terms, the President of the United States, the present Secretary of State, and several of his predecessors, and denouncing generally the conduct of the Government of his own country, and showing himself in heart and soul devoted to the unfriendly views of a foreign country, he comes down to the late letter of remonstrance of Mr. Calhoun to the British Minister, and says, "we are yet to learn with what ears the sound of the trumpet of slavery was listened to by the British Queen and her ministers. We are

yet to learn whether the successor of Elizabeth on the throne of England, and her Burleighs and Walsingtons, upon hearing, that *their avowed purpose to promote universal emancipation and the extinction of slavery, is to be met by the man robbers of our own country with exterminating war; will, like craven cowards, turn their back and flee, or eat their own words, or disclaim the purpose and object which they have avowed.**

I now ask, if the abolitionists can go one step further without entering your territories and controlling your laws? Whether they do not now shake the Union, and whether, if they can proceed any farther, they will not destroy it? These are the allies of the Whigs and the manufacturers. May it not now be asked, with some hope that the people will have opened their eyes, who are the enemies of the Union? and what will stop the abolitionists from going on? Not certainly their discretion, nor their fear of scenes of horror, nor their love of their white brethren, nor of their country;—nothing but their want of power will stop them; and yet you have seen a great array of strength which they control. Beware! the tariff is a trifle to this danger. But I have forgotten, in the exhibition of the power and progress of the abolitionists, to mention the greatest of all their successes—the rejection of the treaty for the annexation of Texas, in which they have triumphed over the interests of the whole Union, and the will and power of all the Southern and all the Western States. But we must pass on. All admit our wrongs, all acknowledge our danger, but as often as the tongue lisps resistance, you are met by the eternal cry of the Union! the Union! the dangers of the Union! and you are subdued by it. Until you can throw off this thraldom, and cherish the vital truths, that your first and holiest allegiance is due to your State institutions—that the Union ought to be altogether secondary in your thoughts and hearts—that all governments ought to be loved and sustained only for their virtues, and that their vices should be watched with jealousy, and resisted at the threshhold, you are unprepared for resistance. If the Union must be imperishable, though established on the usurpation of your rights, the insecurity of your social peace and your insignificance as a people, away with all thoughts of resistance.

In fine, it is my humble opinion, that if we are to resist at all, we must surrender this trembling fear of the dangers of the Union, to other fears and dangers much more important, involving interests still dearer to us, and which immediately “come home to our business and bosoms.” That no effectual resistance will be made without the union of three or four States. That therefore, the great object of exertion is to effect that concurrence; and that as often as you shall attempt separate action you will fail, and more and more weaken the moral power of resistance, to which the physical will always be obedient. Nevertheless, I advise no Hotspur rashness, no immoderate haste, though unnecessary delays are dangerous. You sleep on a volcano. The figure no more than expresses your danger. But that danger, unlike the great natural phenomenon with which I have compared it, may be controled by human power; you may extinguish it, but if you wait till it explodes and covers you with its lava, the metaphor again becomes expressive, and indicates the awful ruin in which you will be involved.

There are some incidental matters on which I propose to dwell for a short time.

There is one measure frequently recommended, which I think decidedly wrong, and therefore dangerous. I mean the call of a State Convention. I think it wrong for the following reasons, among many others :

* For this letter, see the Pendleton Messenger of the 23d August last, taken from the Georgia Constitutionalist.

1st. This is proved in the very outset, by the fact, that many, perhaps all, propose it under the supposition, that a Convention possesses some power applicable to the question, which the Legislature does not possess, which is a gross mistake. The Legislature possesses all the power of the sovereign people, except where it is *expressly* restrained by the Constitution. Now, there is no restraint upon it in the Constitution, which bears on any measure that has been, or that can be, imagined for the redress of our grievances. 2d. The value, efficiency and power of Government, is mainly founded on stability, uniformity, and even the established forms with which its powers are exerted. It presents a well known legal person to the people of State and to the whole world, acting under just responsibility and with the greatest wisdom the country can supply, if the representatives be properly chosen, as they ought always to be, and probably will be, at the present crisis especially. 3d. A Convention has the character, more or less, of a revolutionary measure. It more or less shakes the foundation of Government. It is a comparatively clumsy machine, substituted for one of great skill and appropriateness, instituted by the wisest men in the State, with great deliberation, in the absence of all excitement, for the express purposes of all the powers granted to it by the Constitution. A Convention cannot be called, under the Constitution of this State, for a special purpose. When convened, it has all the power of the people, virtually supercedes the Government, and if it chooses, may dissolve it. Such a body ought not to be constituted unless absolutely necessary. It is not enough to say, it will now do no harm. The example of convening it, is itself an evil. Though there be now no danger of the abuse of it, it may hereafter become a terrible instrument in the hands of a faction or a demagogue. 4th. The action of the State, whatever it may be, must immediately or ultimately, look to the co-operation of other States, and, for the reasons I have mentioned and others, it may have a forbidding aspect in the eyes of those States. If this State shall only act jointly with other States, that action will probably be more harmonious and homogeneous, if we employ the same authorities which they, in all likelihood, will employ.

There is another incidental subject which seems to embarrass the writers of the day, and yet it is extraordinary that it should do so. It is said, the State is pledged to resist. If that pledge ought to be redeemed, it will be only because it is right and proper that we should resist. I shall not stop to enquire what the precise terms of the pledge are, because it is impossible that the State can be pledged to any course inconsistent with its true interests, among which, and the head of which, I admit will rank its untarnished honor. Pledges of a State, like those of an individual, must be to itself or to others. Pledges of the last kind must be inviolably performed, however disadvantageous or impolitic, unless they involve moral guilt. Pledges of the State to itself, however, are very different. They can never mean more than what is always required, independent of any pledge—that she shall act with wisdom, firmness and consistency, according to the circumstances of the time and the occasion when she is called to act. If the pledge be rash or unwise, will it be argued that she is bound to act? The question will always be, pledge or no pledge, what is wise—what is expedient, unless it be dishonorable. When the pledge is not to a third person, surely it cannot be obligatory or reputable to do a thing which is unwise, rash, inexpedient, and perhaps destructive of the very object which the pledge was intended to advance. A pledge to one's self is no more than giving publicity to the thought or opinion of the moment. Having given publicity to it, if it be wise and proper and honorable, not to execute it, shows weakness and instability, and therefore it is disreputable not to do so. On the other hand, it would display weakness or obstinacy to do what was unwise, rash or dishonorable, because one had pledged

himself to do so. It, therefore, seems to me, that the question before us is entirely free from any embarrassment of pledges. But there seems to be a difference between the pledge of an individual and that of a State by its representatives. The pledge of these cannot involve the free deliberations of future functionaries, where there is no third party concerned. If the pledge be wise and proper, it is the duty of the successors to redeem it, but surely not otherwise. The question then seems to me as free as if no pledge had ever been made; and is—ought the State to resist, and what shall be the mode and time of that resistance?

Much has been said about *a leader*. You will be much better without one. Such a leader may be a fit instrument to dictate the movements of a faction, but not those of a people or a nation. Resistance, to be effective and reputable, must not be demagogical, but national. It is paltry and feeble, in this great question, affecting so many States, to talk of *a leader*. The nation must move, and you must have many leaders. No people prepared for a great achievement will ever want leaders. *You want a due preparation of the national mind and spirit for a great movement;—you want also, a settled principle and a determinate object of action*, which no individual should be permitted to dictate. The people acting implicitly under the dictates of a leader, debase themselves, resemble a mob, and exclude from their ranks all the sober, deliberate, steady, good sense of the community, which cannot be expected to follow the authoritative dictates of a leader. The principle and object of action should be established by the people themselves, (who should not surrender the character of thinking beings,) by the advice and assistance of the leading men in their respective States. If the States unite, this will be best done in a Convention of the States; and, if they act separately, by their Legislatures. When the principle and object of action shall be thus established, it will be national, and you will have leaders enough; and they will be fit and appropriate leaders, embracing all the good sense, talent and character of the country. The Congress which declared the independence of the United States, was not governed by *a leader*. The Congress which declared the late war against Great Britain, was not governed by *a leader*. But these acts were brought about by leading men, who knew and spoke the will of their constituents.

The last incidental circumstance which I shall notice, is the servile adulation which is paid to the Union, at a time it would be natural and, I think, just, to feel resentful. It does, indeed, excite my special wonder, to see Southern men bowing down before the idol and shouting hosannas to it, as if it were in the act of showering blessings upon us. These are, I confess, a music hateful to my ear. I could as much respect the spirit of a man who had fallen under the blows of an adversary, and who should choose that moment to eulogize his virtues, his humanity and his benevolence. I blame no just respect to the Union. I have loved the Union as much as any man in it; I still respect it, and wish to preserve it: but it is not in my heart, while my country is smarting under its lash, to pour out my devotions to it. I should consider it a moral desilement. In a nation, it is a sign of a dark and feeble mind and a pusillanimous spirit.

No man, with such a spirit, can duly love his nearer and dearer institutions; no man, with such a spirit, will be ready to resist the wrongs done to them. Reflect on the purposes of a good and beneficent Government. Such a Government is frequently described by figures, significant of benefits received and love returned, which our hearts, rather than our minds, suggest, and which are, therefore, more emphatically just.—It is called a parental protector and a kind nursing mother. Now, name a single blessing of such a Government that you enjoy. Does it make you (the South) great—does it enshrine you in honor—does it make you rich and prosperous

—does it secure your property—does it protect the peace of your slumbers—does it shield you from the fanatic incendiary, or does it not hold up his torch and enliven its flame, and invite him to apply it to your most combustible material? Name, if you can, one single benefit of a good and beneficent Government which you enjoy under it. Thanks to a sturdy nature, we still live and breathe in spite of its inflictions. Even this we owe to our neglected and forsaken State institutions. But your assailants tell you plainly, that even this, the bare breath of life, which they have left in you, you enjoy merely under a short reprieve, until their plans are ready for the execution of that doom of desolation and ruin which they have pronounced against you, and which they are hastening on with all their zeal and power. In the Halls of Legislature they are already permitted to tell you, that your presence there is pollution of their pharisaical purity; and are you, proud freemen, (do you not so call yourselves? with what truth I shall not decide;) humbly to solicit their forborn embrace? Surely, I may say, let us have no more of this servile adulation of the Union, while it is what you (not enjoy, but) suffer. On the contrary, examine freely and fearlessly its value and the dangers with which it threatens you, as well as the suffering which it already inflicts. Despise the clamors raised against you as enemies of the Union. It is false, absolutely false, that you are the enemies of it, in its truth and purity, and it were base and cowardly not to be the enemies of its abuses. As it is practically administered, call it by what name you please, it is a gross and oppressive tyranny, and much the worse because it is many headed. "A popular tyranny is more terrible and debasing than the tyranny of a monarch; in its appetites more inappeasable and gross, and in its duration more lasting. It never dies. The gloomy expanse of time which it covers is never irradiated by a Trajan or an Antonius. There is an eternal duration of its vicious qualities and its rapacious reign." That there are any among us that can pour out this crouching adulation, I must lament, and I can pity the mistaken devotion. But the Southern man who can join our assailants bitterly and acrimoniously, in the slanderous cry of our enmity to the Union, for the purpose of weakening the resolution and paralyzing the efforts of his own countrymen, in resistance to its abuses, I am obliged to think justly chargeable with the most unnatural feelings, with a hideous want of patriotism, with a most guilty moral treason, which, though the laws do not touch, the public scorn will not allow to go unpunished.

Finally, I say, do no rash or sudden act: wait yet longer. There are some favorable signs in the political heavens. There are, I think, hopes, that your grievances will be redressed by constitutional and peaceable means, and the dangers of the Union averted. The Democratic party see how profitless and debasing it is to serve men instead of principles. I think it may be predicted (the darkest hour usually precedes the dawn) that before very long, perhaps within the coming year, there will be a re-action which will establish the Democratic party in its ancient power and purity, and unite, in a faithful and fraternal band, cemented by their best interests and their best feelings, all the members of that great conservative body, throughout the Union, whether North, South or West. The incongruous and unpatriotic combinations of Whigism cannot long cohere. The sacrifice of Texas, if nothing else, must make it odious to all the sound part of the nation, and particularly to the South and West. They cannot—they will not forgive it. The commencement of this re-action will probably be more or less advanced or retarded by the result of the ensuing Presidential election, in which, instead of being luke-warm, the whole South and West should put forth their whole zeal and strength.

But this hope is not a reason why the remedial movements of the South should not commence, at farthest, with the close of the present year, when the turmoil of all the

elections will be over. You ought by sober, regular and deliberate steps, to determine the general principles of your action—to organize the means of union and concert among the States, and to watch the movement of the times.—The Southern States ought now to assume, and afterwards keep up, as long as their oppression and danger last, an armour of defence prepared for contingencies. I do not, of course, mean an array of physical force, but a moral armour under which they may be ready, speedily to act, with union and concert, as circumstances may require.

I have already adverted to the subject of Texas. The rejection of the Treaty of Annexation I regard as a measure (if not of wickedness) of egregious folly, sacrificing interests of great value and importance to the whole Union, but particularly to the South and West; and more especially in connexion with the claim of Great Britain, which, I fear, is well founded, to the free navigation of the Mississippi, and, as a consequence, perhaps of its tributaries. This right, if it exist, will give her uncontrolled access to your territories, and carry, alike, her commercial agents and her emissaries of abolition, through the midst of your towns and plantations into the very heart of Texas, all which would have been averted for ever by the ratification of the Treaty of Annexation. But when we look, through the vista of futurity, at the advantages to commerce, to navigation, to manufactures, to agriculture, and, above all, to the national security, and power and greatness which would necessarily have resulted from the acquisition, we can hardly estimate the immense value of the boon, not to us alone, but to the whole Union, which was providentially put in our power, and which we have wantonly thrown away. But the evils of the rejection of the Treaty do not end with its direct effects. The time of the negotiation was eminently propitious, and the President deserves, and will yet, and speedily, receive the abundant thanks of the country for the promptness, wisdom and patriotism with which he seized and improved it. In the language of an able Senator, (Mr. Buchanan, of Pa.,) whose speech ought to occupy the columns of every patriotic press in the country: "Had the Treaty been ratified by the Senate—had the union between the Republics been completed, the subject would have passed away without producing a ripple upon the surface of public opinion throughout the world." But, excited and emboldened by the rejection of the Treaty, you already behold the two greatest powers of Europe obtrusively passing their just political limits, taking footing upon a portion of the continent so appropriated, that except in a hostile spirit, according to national usage, they were forbidden to interpose, and projecting their schemes of intrigue, as if you were in the heart of Europe. They have crossed the Rubicon. England has already had her emissaries in Texas. Cuba will next be seized, under some pretext or other, as a fair field for Abolition. She will then command the Gulf and the Mississippi. To speak of no other danger, what will then be the condition of New Orleans, without which, the whole West could not breathe; or, if at all, like an asthmatic patient? Thus we see laid open the clear sighted and patriotic wisdom of this glorious union of Whigs, Manufacturers and Abolitionists, by which the Treaty of Annexation was rejected.

Even this is not all, or the worst evil of the rejection of this wise and excellent Treaty. Should Santa Anna be able (which God forbid, though we know not what foreign intrigues and foreign funds may enable him to do,) to conquer Texas, what a spectacle will be presented to the eyes of the American people! A people of your own blood, who, worn out by barbarous, desultory invasion and war, as brethren, threw themselves into your arms, sought your fraternal embrace, and entreated your protection, which, by all the ties of nature, of honor, and of interest, you should have

granted them, will be slaughtered before your eyes, and their noble country, which ought already to have been yours, ruined and desolated. We know from the character and past history of their assailant, that they will receive no mercy, no quarter. The bloody Ampudia, (so much so as to be utterly out of the pale of civilization,) the Gazettes inform us, has been put at the head of the army of invasion. People of the South, people of the West, nay, people of the whole United States, if your morals be those of Christianity, if you be not utterly bereft of the "natural touch" of human beings, with what feelings must you think of the abominable intrigues and combinations in your own councils, which will have brought on this bloody and barbarous tragedy! The people of Texas have been slanderously called "vagabonds and outlaws." You know this to be utterly false. We all know, their slanderers know, that, with very few exceptions, which will characterize all new settlements, a better and braver people never were the pioneers of the Anglo-Saxon blood and fame. Far from being vagabonds and outlaws, there never was a new settlement on this continent, which, for their numbers, embodied as much comfortable independence, (not to speak of wealth, though there are among them wealthy men,) as much worth of character, as much improvement and intelligence, and above all, as much energetic enterprise and generous bravery.

The battle of *San Jacinto* would be a proud distinction for any nation, and still more, the conduct and bearing of the victors, after their triumph. The civilization of any country would be illustrated and adorned by it. With the blood of the *Alamo* still reeking from the ground, instead of a merciless retaliation upon the Mexican tyrant and his miserable followers, the softening influence of civilization on the horrors of war, was never more conspicuous. Future times will scarcely credit the notorious fact, that under such horrible provocation, not a hair of their heads was touched; that they were treated with kindness and humanity while prisoners, and permitted, unharmed, to return to their country and homes. And shall these brave and benevolent men perish under the hands of the bloody tyrant, whose life they spared, when forfeited by all the laws of God and man—a tyrant, who has no more claim to their submission than Carolina has to that of Georgia. Texas is, by national law and right, as free of Mexico as Mexico is of the United States. She was never subject to any power but that of Spain. Under that she was perfectly independent of Mexico.* She united as an Independent Sovereign State in forming the Republic of Mexico. But where is that Republic now? Is th: dictator, (we should say usurper,) of a subjugated people, Texas not included, that Republic? And, if he were, as an independent sovereign member of the confederation, she was no longer bound than the duration of her will and pleasure.† A Sovereign State can be no longer bound by any compact whatever. He may, indeed, make war upon her, and so may any tyrant upon any free State, but on no other ground of national law than he could on the United States, or any other Sovereign State.

We have talked of purchasing his right to Texas, but he has no right of which he can dispose. We might have bought his unfounded pretensions to make the acquisition peaceable, but no more. How idle, then, has been all the pathos of our pharisaical brethren, about the invasion of the rights of Mexico by the Treaty of Annexation. But, I ask again, shall these brave and generous men perish under the hands of the mongrel breed of Mexico? Two-thirds of them are the children of the great West. The benignant sun of our own dear South shone on the birth of the other; and will the

*Humbold; Malte-Brun; Poinsett's Notes, Appendix, project of a Constitution; Mr. Buchanan's Speech. †Vattel p. 59.

people of these regions stand by, fold their arms, and with cold blood, behold the massacre! for such it would be, if they be vanquished? Forbid it humanity, forbid it honor; let the holy ties of kindred blood forbid it. But, it may be asked, what can be done? The Union has abandoned them. I humbly suggest that the power is indubitable. The will only is wanting. It is very plain what can be done, and what ought to be done. There is nothing in the Constitution of the Union to forbid the States loaning them money. They want nothing else. Aid them liberally in this way, and volunteers enough will be found to unite with them to furnish other fields of S in Jacinto, on which "the lone star" shall again shine in triumph.

If this suggestion shall be thought worthy of adoption, (and I cannot doubt that it is,) there is probably no time to be lost. Let active and able men of the South and West, who feel interested in the cause, communicate with each other as soon as possible, particularly on the mode of approaching the Legislative bodies of the States, and in arranging details. Can it be doubted, that if properly brought before the people, (I mean through their Legislative bodies,) they will respond like men and brethren to this sacred call? It is an occasion on which they should stretch a point, and be liberal. It is an occasion of life and death to fellow beings and kindred blood. It is an occasion of the utmost national interest, independent of the claims of humanity. There is no depending interest of the United States of half as much importance as the prevention of the subjugation of Texas. It is a country absolutely essential to our security and interest, and it must, sooner or later, become a part of our Union, at whatever cost. By this aid you will bind the people of Texas to you forever. Let the threatened invasion be repelled by your aid, and you need afterwards entertain no fears of foreign intrigue. The union with Texas will be consummated in the very act of this brotherly assistance. You will run no risk, if the invasion be thus repelled, of the re-imbursement of your pecuniary advances. Let her independence and peace be thus secured, and your claims will speedily be converted into stock of the United States. If it shall be said, and it will probably be so said, to defeat this benevolently measure, that this invasion is only an impotent threat—all will rejoice if it be true; but the rule of war is to deem every thing that is possible, to be probable; and here the event deprecued is, not only possible, but much more than probable. Be, therefore, not deterred by any such suggestion, from the good work. Let the aid be afforded under regulations of prudence which shall make it applicable only on the contingency of its being necessary and which shall secure its due application. The money need not be drawn from your treasuries, (which may not be supplied,) but may be raised on stocks authorized by the respective States. Men of the South and West, if there be political differences between you, lay them down for a moment at the shrine of patriotism and humanity, and do this great service to the interests of your country, and at the same time prevent this awful sacrifice of your own kindred; which, should it happen, your hearts will bleed to behold, and which your consciences will ever afterwards reproach you for having suffered.

It has not been without some hesitation and reluctance, that I have at all entered into this discussion. I considered my day of activity as by gone, and was reposing in the most absolute retirement, in which I desired to remain for the rest of my life, when the incident mentioned in the beginning of this paper, drew from me, as an act of civility, a short expression of my opinions; and I should have said no more, but for the misconception of my views on a point on which I am most anxious not to be misunderstood. But, being about to correct this error, and feeling as strongly and indignantly as any man can do, the oppression, disgrace and danger

under which my country suffers, although no one is more sensible of the little importance of my opinions and counsels than I am, I have felt it to be the duty of a citizen, on my part, to throw them into the mass of deliberation on the subject of the great crisis which hangs so awfully over us. Besides, I have always had an utter abhorrence of oppression, by whatever hands it may be inflicted. It is now a third of a century, since when, in the prime of life, with some share of popular favor, and ambitious of more, I did not hesitate to hazard all that I possessed and all that I hoped for, in defending the rights and interests of that people who are now the oppressors of my own immediate country, and who threaten daily, not only its prosperity, but its social peace. I held up, with a few noble associates, the flag of their gallant but then unpopular little navy; I vindicated their glorious commercial enterprize—an enterprize which, while it enriched them, made no one poor; and I defended, (not without success,) their pecuniary rights, against what I considered, the hand of rapacity and unjust power, though it was the hand of the political men with whom I was associated. It would ill become me then, I thought, to close my life by declining to offer my counsel for what it was worth, and to raise my voice in the assertion of the rights and the reprobation of the wrongs of "my own, my native land."

LANGDON CHEVES.

W46





